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Hamilton Fish Armstrong Dead at 80

By GLENN FOWLER

Hamilton Fish Armstrong, an authority on international politics and editor of the quarterly Foreign Affairs for 44 years until his retirement last fall, died yesterday at the New York University Medical Center after a long illness. He was 80 years old on April 7.

Mr. Armstrong, a journalist who counted many of the world's leading statesmen among his friends and confidants, had been a patient at the Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine at the medical center for the last seven months. He had lived his entire life at 58 West 10th Street.

In a tribute to Mr. Armstrong, Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's assistant for National Security Affairs, said yesterday.

"Hamilton Fish Armstrong was a friend and an inspiration. Urbane, concerned, wise, open to different opinions, he always knew that our common values were greater than our differences and that America could be true to herself and to be relevant morally and politically to the rest of the world. This was the spirit of Foreign Affairs, with which his name grew synonymous over half a century. The country will miss him and his friends' lives will be emptier without him."

Hamilton Fish Armstrong lived in two worlds, one global and the other intensely local. His long career was spent writing about and occasionally taking part in world politics, yet he remained first and last a passionate New Yorker whose only home throughout his life was the three-story red brick house on West 10th Street in which he was born.

It was as a founder and for 44 years the editor of the influential quarterly Foreign Affairs that Mr. Armstrong left his stamp on the diplomatic scene. His wide acquaintance with world leaders and his ability to entice many of them to write for his scholarly journal placed him closer to the nerve center of international political activity than most of the participants themselves.

The list of contributors to Foreign Affairs reads like the roster of a half-century-long summit conference. Leon Trotsky wrote for it when he was struggling for power in the then-young Soviet Union; Nikita S. Khrushchev's by-line turned up on the eve of his tour of the United States in 1959. Heads of government ranging from Franklin D. Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy to Anthony Eden (now Earl of Avon), Marshal Tito, Jawaharlal Nehru, Konrad Adenauer and Gamal Abdel Nasser have shared their thoughts in its pages.

An Article by "X"

Perhaps the best-known article Foreign Affairs ever ran appeared in 1947 when, under the by-line "X," a person obviously having intimate knowledge of the formulation of United States foreign policy wrote the first public outline of what was to become the policy of containment toward the Soviet Union. It soon became an open secret that "X" was George F. Kennan, then the State Department's chief policy planner and later briefly an Ambassador to Moscow.

In 1922, when the Council on Foreign Relations decided to set up a magazine of comment on diplomacy, world politics and related topics. Mr. Armstrong was asked to be a member of the staff nucleus. At the time he was a special correspondent in Europe for The New York Evening Post, having joined the Post after Army service in the first World War and a year as a military attache in Belgrade.

Then 29 years old, he was named managing editor of Foreign Affairs when it began publication. Six years later the original editor, Archibald Cary Coolidge, a Harvard history professor, died and Mr. Armstrong took the editor's chair, a post he held until his retirement last Oct. 1 upon publication of the journal's 50th anniversary issue.

Gave Full Time to Job

Mr. Armstrong also served at the outset as executive director of the Council on Foreign Relations, a nonprofit organization that in more than half a century has counted among its prime movers scores of leading figures in business, government and education. But as the council expanded and its activities broadened, he began to devote full time to Foreign Affairs, which itself was fast growing in influence.

From his editorial office at 58 East 68th Street, Mr. Armstrong put together four issues a year of the magazine, whose sedate blue-gray cover soon became recognized in the major world capitals. Inside were articles intended, as the council defined its journal's purpose, "to create and stimulate international thought in the United States."

At the end of its first year of publication, Foreign Affairs had a circulation of 3,700 at $1.25 a copy. Today, selling at $2.50, it circulates 70,000 copies and reaches centers of policy-making and scholarship in every corner of the world.

A common misapprehension that Foreign Affairs represents official United States foreign policy persists because of the large number of top-level government figures who have written in its pages. But, far from being a mouthpiece, Foreign Affairs under Mr. Armstrong's direction consistently sought to reflect viewpoints other than that of the United States. Students of world politics came to regard it as the pioneer publication in the field of international relations and look to it for forecasts of events to come.

Books on Peace Prospects

Over the years, Mr. Armstrong was called upon to serve in a number of advisory capacities to the State Department. In the Second World War he was an adviser on postwar problems and on the proposed United Nations Charter, and he attended the international conference that founded the United Nations at San Francisco in 1945.

His writing was not confined to Foreign Affairs, for which he wrote 49 articles, but include a number of books, most written in the period between the two world wars and dealing with prospects for peace and world order.

His world view could best be described as realistic; basically he was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but he repeatedly warned that the peace that much of the world expected to last after the first World War was precarious indeed.

In 1933, shortly after Hitler rose to power in Germany, Mr. Armstrong was the first American to gain an interview with the new Chancellor. The Hitler phenomenon was not yet taken seriously by most of the world's political leaders, but Mr. Armstrong's book, "Hitler's Reich—the First Phase," published that summer, began with the words "A people has disappeared" and predicted that Hitler would remain in power and would trouble the world.

The next year Mr. Armstrong published "Europe Between Wars?", detailing the pessimism that led him to predict the war that broke out five years later. After the war, he wrote three more books on aspects of international relations, including the first of an intended series of volumes of his memoirs, covering the years from the peace at Versailles to the accession of Hitler.

Mr. Armstrong's one book that did not deal with the world at large appeared in 1963 and was titled "Those Days." It was an affectionate remembrance of a childhood in New York at the turn of the century, and it revealed his love for the block, the neighborhood and the city where, except for annual trips abroad and special diplomatic or fact-finding assignments away from home, he spent his entire life.

"My first clear picture is of marching men," he wrote in "Those Days." "I am peering down into Fifth Avenue through a balcony railing of the old Grosvenor, on the corner of Tenth Street. It is the fall of 1896, I am 3 years old, and this is the great 'sound-money' parade in which all right-thinking New York is protesting against the free-silver heresies of William Jennings Bryan."

Mr. Armstrong was born on April 7, 1893, in the house at 58 West 10th Street, near Sixth Avenue, that his father, an artist who created mosaics and stained-glass windows, had acquired and expanded to accommodate a family that, with Hamilton's arrival, included six children. The father, D. Maitland Armstrong, had traveled widely and served for a time in Rome as Consul General to the Papal States.

Mr. Armstrong's mother, the former Helen Neilson, was a descendant of the Stuyvesant family and, as her son wrote, was "quite typically New York — the New York of wide brownstone houses with high stoops and high ceilings, carriages to supplement but not replace the pleasures of walking, constant visits back and forth among relatives, large Sunday dinners followed by long amusementless Sunday afternoons."

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